

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6285

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

USUN NEW YORK 131

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 0362

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BH, GT, UK

SUBJ: PREMIER PRICE ON THE BELIZE DISPUTE

1. MY APRIL 12 COURTESY CALL ON PREMIER PRICE WAS RELAXED AND INFORMAL OCCASION DURING WHICH INDEPENDENCE QUESTION ALMOST WHOLLY DOMINATED CONVERSATION. PRICE SIAD SINGEL MOST IMPORTANT RESULT HE EXPECTS FROM PUP CONVENTION THIS WEEKEND IS SOLID PARTY MANDATE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT CONTINUE SEARCH FOR WORKABLE MEANS TO INDEPENDENCE. HE GAVE BRIEF RUNDOWN ON WHERE MATTERS STOOD WITH REGARD TO NEGOTIATIONS AND DISPUTE, INCLUDEING HIS QUEST FOR MULTILATERAL SECURITY FORCE TO GUARANTEE INDEPENDENCE. HE ALSO BROUGHT UP INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES HE IS EXPERIENCING, RECALLING THAT BOTH POLITICALPARTIES IN 1974 HAD CAMPAIGNED ON INDEPENDENCE PLATFORMS, PROBLEM NOW, PRICE LAMENTS IS THAT OPPOSITION UDP HAS BACKED AWAY SUBSTANTIALY FROM THIS POSITION AND NOW ADVOCATES POSTPONEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE FOR AT LEAST TEN
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YEARS. UDP'S STAND, HOWEVER, WILL NOT DETER HIM.

2. PREMIER THEN STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT THE UK'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH GUATEMALA WERE AT AN IMPASSE, ADDING, PERHAPS FOR THE RECORD, THAT NO PART OF BELIZEAN LAND OR SOVEREIGNTY IS NEGOTIABLE. HE POINTED OUT ON WALL MAP 1,000 SQUARE MILES OF LAND AND SEABEND WHICH HE THOUGHT

GUATEMALANS UNOFFICIALLY HAD AGREED TO ACCEPT. HE NOTED HOW HE BELIEVED HIS OFFER OF A SEA CORRIDOR WOULD SOLVE GUATEMALA'S ALLEGED PROBLEM OF ACCESS TO THE SEA FROM PUERTO BARRIOS AREA. PRICE THEN SAID THAT THERE WAS OIL IN AREA, POINTING SEPARATELY TO BOTH OFFSHORE SAPODILLO CAYS AREA AND VAGUE POINT SOUTHWEST OF PUNTA GORDA. HE SEEMED TO MENTION THIS AS EMPHASIS TO NON-NEGOTIABLE CHARACTER OF BELIZEAN LAND.

3. I ASKED WHAT MIGHT BE NEXT IN VIEW OF THE IMPASSE IN NEGOTIATIONS, AND THE PREMIER UNHEISTATINGLY REPLIED "THE SECURITY FORCE". HE PROCEEDED TO ELABORATE, EXPLAINING THAT HE HAD OBTAINED PRIME MINISTER MANLEY'S PROMISE OF A JAMAICAN COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FOR THE FORCE, A BARBADIAN OFFER OF SOME 200 TROOPS, AND A VAGUER COMMITMENT FROM FORBES BURNHAM. PREMIER SAID HE NEEDED AT LEAST ONE OTHER "LATIN AMERICAN/COUNTRY AS PARTICIPANT. WHEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY, HE SAID GENERAL TORRIJOS ALREADY HAD MADE FIRM PROMISE, DESPITE TROUBLES AT HOME, TO COMMIT PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS TO SUCH A FORCE AND THAT VENEZUELA WAS OTHER REAL HOP. ACCORDING TO PREMIER, PRESIDENT PEREZ HAS NOT COMMITTED HIMSELF ONE WAY OR OTHER.

4. PREMIER ALSO MENTIONED THE U.S. AND CANADA IN CONNECTION WITH SECURITY FORCE. BELIEVE MY REPLY DASHED ANY HOPES HE MIGHT HAVE HAD FOR U.S. PARTICIPATION, BUT HE APPARENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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BELIEVE CANADA OFFERS REAL POSSIBILITY.

5. PRICE USED CONVERSATION TO REITERATE HIS CONCERN THAT BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON VERY DEFINITELY APPEARS TO HAVE GOTTEN WRONG IMPRESSION OF WHAT HE TOLD SECRETARY VANCE (SEE BELIZE 0327) ON MARCH 24. HE STRESSED THAT HE DID NOT CLAIM THAT MULTILATERAL FORCE WAS A FACT. ALL COMMITMENTS ARE ORAL AND AT THIS POINT TAKEN AT BEST. ALL CONCERNED ARE AWARE OF THIS. PRICE SAID HE ALSO DID NOT FEEL HE IMPLIED THAT HMG WAS WHOLEHEARTEDLY BEHIND HIM IN EFFORTS TO ARRANGE SECURITY FORCE. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, ASK AGAIN FOR A COPY OF WHATEVER MIGHT HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO BRITISH.

6. AS CONVERSATION ENDED PRICE ANIMATEDLY SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE TWO FURTHER POINTS: (1) HE EXPECTED VENEZUELAN DELEGATION TO ARRIVE THAT EVENING FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF SECURITY FORCE NOTION; AND (2) HE FELT THE ECLA COMMITTEE CURRENTLY MEETING IN BELIZE GAVE MORAL SUPPORT FOR BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

7. COMMENT: GIVEN "FIRST CHAT" BASIS OF CONVERSATION I FOUND PRICE TO BE SURPRISINGLY CANDID, AND COUPLE OF ITEMS

SEEM WORTHY OF NOTE. THIS WAS FIRST TIME, AT LEAST WITHIN
INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY OF THIS POST, THAT ANY GOB OFFICIAL
HAS ASSERTED WUITE MATTER-OF-FACTLY ARE PETROLEUM RESOURCES
ACTUALLY EXIST IN TOLEDO DISTRICT (GOB AND OIL COMPANY
OFFICIALS HAVE ALWAYS STAUNCHLY MAINTAINED THAT NOTHING
MORESTHAN PROMISING STRATA HAS BEEN FOUND). IF PREMIER
BELIEVES THIS (REGARDLESS OF WHETHER IT IS SO), IT CAN ONLY
SET HIM MORE FIRMLY THAN EVER IN STANCE AGAINST LAND CESSION.
CONVERSATION MADE CLEAR THAT PRICE STILL FEELS HE CANNOT
ACCEPT ANY FORM OF CESSION--EITHER LAND OR WHAT HE WOULD
REGARD AS PART OF COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY--AS QUID PRO QUO
FOR INDEPENDENCE. DEADLOCK IN NEGOTIATIONS APPEARS TO HAVE
CONVINCED HIM THAT ONLY WAY FOR HIM TO GO IS SECURITY FORCE
ROUTE, AND, AS REVELATION ABOUT ARRIVAL OF VENEZUELAN
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DELEGATION INDICATES, HE ISPLUNGING AHEAD WITH THIS IN
DEDICATED FASHION.
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Message Attributes

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